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Agenda item 112 (e)
Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of 47 members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 24 April 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations presents her compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to refer to United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/251 entitled "Human Rights Council" of 15 March 2006, of which paragraph 15 states that "elections of the first members of the Council shall take place on 9 May 2006".

In this connection, the Permanent Representative of Thailand has further the honour to submit the candidature of Thailand to the Human Rights Council at the above-mentioned elections. A copy of Thailand's voluntary pledges and commitments in the field of human rights, prepared in accordance with paragraph 8 of the resolution, is also enclosed herewith.

06-32609 (E) 280406

Annex to the note verbale dated 24 April 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Thailand's voluntary pledges and commitments in the field of human rights

Thailand is firmly committed to the respect for human dignity, justice, compassion, non-discrimination and a sense of moral obligations to fellow human beings, which together constitute core human rights principles. On 10 December 1948, Thailand joined the other 47 States Members of the United Nations in voting to adopt the draft Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since then, Thailand has gradually accepted international legal obligations concerning human rights. Thailand is, at present, a State party to five of the seven core international human rights instruments. They are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Thailand is also a State party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, thereby accepting the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to receive and consider individual complaints regarding alleged violations of the Convention. Most recently, in January and February 2006, Thailand became a State party to the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict, respectively.

Furthermore, Thailand is a State party to five of the eight core conventions under the International Labour Organization pertaining to forced labour and its abolition (Conventions Nos. 29 and 105), equal remuneration between men and women for work of equal value (Convention No. 100), minimum age for employment (Convention No. 138), and the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour (Convention No. 182). Thailand is also a State party to the four Geneva Conventions on international humanitarian law of 1949.

Thailand's aforementioned legal obligations are given effect to under Thai law. In particular, Thailand's present Constitution of 1997 guarantees civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and fundamental freedoms for all, in line with its international legal obligations. Various mechanisms have also been set up under the present Constitution to advance the course of human rights within the country. They are the National Human Rights Commission, the Parliamentary Ombudsman, the Administrative Court and the Constitutional Court.

Moreover, Thailand attaches great importance to the preparation and presentation of its reports to the relevant treaty bodies. In July 2005, Thailand submitted its initial report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to the Human Rights Committee, and in January 2006, submitted its periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Due regard is given to the observations and recommendations made by these treaty bodies.

At the regional level, Thailand fully supports initiatives to enhance dialogue and cooperation among countries within the region, such as the annual Canada-China-Norway Symposium on Human Rights. Initiatives to discuss the possibility of establishing human rights mechanisms at the regional and subregional levels are also very much encouraged by Thailand.

Over the years, Thailand has played host to several regional and subregional meetings and workshops on human rights, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). For example, in 2001, Thailand hosted the Ninth Asia-Pacific Workshop on Regional Cooperation for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. In 2004, Thailand hosted the Inter-Sessional Workshop on National Human Rights Plans of Action and Human Rights Education in the Asia-Pacific Region and the Subregional Workshop on the Implementation of the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Thailand recognizes a strong linkage between human rights and human security. Thailand is a member of the Human Security Network (HSN) which is a group of 14 like-minded countries in all parts of the world working together to guarantee freedom from fear, freedom from want and human dignity for all. Activities in the area of human rights under HSN include the promotion of human rights education, the protection of and assistance to children affected by armed conflicts and the promotion of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. Thailand sees the Human Rights Council as a turning point in the promotion and protection of human rights and looks forward to contributing to the work of the Council, especially in its formative first session.

In the light of its candidature for election to the Human Rights Council and in accordance with paragraph 8 of resolution 60/251, Thailand pledges voluntary commitments as follows:

Promotion and protection of human rights at the international level

- Thailand will fully cooperate with the Human Rights Council in all of its endeavours to further the course of human rights worldwide through constructive dialogue and cooperation.
- Thailand will continue to support efforts to mainstream human rights within the United Nations system.
- Thailand reaffirms its belief that all human rights are indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and will continue to promote and protect all human rights, be they civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development on an equal footing.
- Thailand will continue to support the work of various United Nations agencies and funds dealing with human rights matters such as OHCHR, UNHCR, UNIFEM, INSTRAW and UNICEF, through, inter alia, financial contribution on a regular basis.

- Thailand will continue to support the work of national human rights institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, through, inter alia, regular financial contributions to relevant agencies such as the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions.

Promotion and protection of human rights at the national level

- Thailand will continue to mainstream human rights in all of its work at the national level.
- Thailand will continue to promote human rights education at all levels as a tool to prevent human rights violations.
- Thailand will cooperate with the United Nations treaty monitoring bodies by implementing, to the best of its capacity, their concluding observations and recommendations in regard to Thailand.
- Thailand is considering becoming a party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
- Thailand is in the process of taking steps under its constitution to become a party to the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air.
- Thailand is taking steps to become a party to the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the four Geneva Conventions on international humanitarian law of 1949.

As a country that has played an active role in the United Nations reform process, especially the reform of the United Nations human rights mechanisms, it is Thailand's aspiration to have an opportunity to participate in the first session of the Human Rights Council as one of its members. Thailand has a high expectation of the work of the newly established Human Rights Council and will do its utmost to ensure that the Council becomes a main forum for constructive dialogue and cooperation on issues concerning human rights.

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Note verbale dated 20 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Zambia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Zambia to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to inform him that the Government of the Republic of Zambia has decided to present its candidature to membership in the United Nations Human Rights Council at the elections to be held during the United Nations General Assembly on 9 May 2006.

The Mission of Zambia in accordance with resolution 60/251 is therefore attaching an aide-memoire concerning its commitments to the Human Rights Council.

06-32615 (E) 280406

Annex to the note verbale dated 20 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Zambia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Aide-memoire

Zambia's candidature for the Human Rights Council

Zambia welcomes the establishment of the Human Rights Council and views this achievement as an opportunity for the international community to further strengthen the human rights regime. Zambia in that regard supports the critical role of the United Nations in the advancement of human rights and will endeavour to contribute to the Council to enable it to effectively promote and protect all human rights.

Zambia's Constitution

Zambia's Constitution, which is the fundamental law of the land contains the Bill of Rights, which makes provisions for fundamental rights and freedoms enjoyed by every person in Zambia regardless of place of origin, political opinion, colour, creed or sex.

Zambia's Constitution emphasizes democracy, respect for human rights and limitation of Government power. The Zambian people have the right to elect a leader of their choice. Zambia has separation of power with the executive, legislature and judiciary as independent arms of Government. Zambia has also endeavoured to create an enabling environment for effective participation of civil society in the affairs of the nation. Furthermore, the country has, since achieving independence in 1964, regularly held elections at both national and local levels. Independent observers have generally declared these elections free and fair. In the presidential and general elections of 2001, there were 11 presidential candidates including 2 high-profile women. This year, Zambia once again goes to the polls and it is envisaged that there will be several presidential candidates, including women.

Economic, social and cultural rights are also provided for in the Constitution although they are not justiciable. The Constitution also provides that the State shall be based on democratic principles and endeavour to create an economic environment which shall encourage individual initiative and self-reliance among the people and promote private investment; create conditions under which all citizens shall be able to secure adequate means of livelihood; provide social amenities, equal and adequate educational opportunities; provide for persons with disabilities and recognize the right of every person to fair labour practices.

General framework within which human rights are protected

Human Rights Commission

The establishment of the Zambian Human Rights Commission in 1996 has further enhanced the promotion and enjoyment of human rights. The Commission is mandated, inter alia, to investigate human rights violations; mal-administration of justice; and to propose effective measures to prevent human rights abuses. The creation of the Commission is clearly a milestone in Zambia's history and indicates

the State party's willingness to promote the enjoyment of human rights by Zambian people. Although the Commission has no enforcement powers its presence is noticeable in that it highlights abuses of human rights wherever perpetrated by the State party or any other body and therefore discourages further abuses.

Law Association

The Law Association of Zambia, which was established pursuant to an Act of Parliament, also has a Human Rights Committee which plays a similar role to the Human Rights Commission and reports to the Council of the Association.

Media

The media in Zambia enjoy an increasing high degree of freedom, which allows the press, radio and television to play a significant role in exposing breaches of human rights and fundamental freedoms and exert pressure for remedial action. The media are free to report Parliamentary proceedings as well as court proceedings relating to human rights matters.

NGOs/civil society

Churches and NGOs play a prominent role in the promotion and protection of human rights standards among the members of the public and are involved in various human rights activities.

Foreign policy

The main guiding principle of Zambia's foreign policy relates to human rights and fundamental freedoms. Zambia is convinced that there can be no meaningful development without the full protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms. In that regard we have signed and ratified the major international and regional instruments relating to the promotion and protection of human rights including:

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Convention on the Political Rights of Women
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- African Charter on Human and People's Rights
- United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
- Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees
- Four Geneva Conventions of 1949

- Protocols to the Geneva Conventions
- Seven International Labour Organisation fundamental human rights conventions
- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

Zambia's role in international relations

Zambia's role in contributing to the liberation struggle in Africa

Zambia underscores the right of all people to self-determination. Zambia's steadfast belief in the principle of the right to self-determination compelled us to contribute to the liberation struggle in Southern Africa and other parts of Africa and has continued to help countries emerging from conflict in the subregion. In that regard Zambia has played centre stage in brokering peace agreements in the Southern African region in particular. Zambia will continue to propagate this principle at the international and regional levels.

Zambia's assistance to refugees

As a result of the liberation struggles in Southern Africa and civil wars that have emerged in some neighbouring countries, Zambia has played host to refugees fleeing from conflict. Zambia in that regard has implemented the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees to the letter and hosted several influxes of refugees since its independence in 1964. In its attempt to address the long refugee situation, Zambia has been implementing durable solutions. For those refugees that have not been voluntarily repatriated, Zambia, in close collaboration with UNHCR, has initiated a development programme known as the "Zambian Initiative" to spur economic development in the western province of Zambia which has a large concentration of refugees, as a pilot project. This is a holistic approach which is designed to assist both the host communities and refugees. The ultimate goal is to make both parties self-sufficient. Those refugees who do not return can therefore remain in the area with dignity, being self-reliant, and contribute to national development in a positive way.

Zambia's contribution to peacekeeping missions

Zambia supports the notion that security and peace, development and human rights are essential pillars in international relations. As a firm believer in the role that the United Nations should play in the maintenance of international peace and security, Zambia has significantly contributed to United Nations peacekeeping operations by providing military, police and civilian personnel to peacekeeping missions around the world. Zambia has participated in 15 peacekeeping missions and is currently involved in 9 missions.

Zambia's commitments to advance the protection and promotion of human rights at the national and international levels

- Zambia was a member of the Commission on Human Rights for three terms. With this experience Zambia hopes to work closely with members in the Council and non-members in formulating rules and structures, including the

peer review mechanism designed to ensure a strong Council that is transparent, non-selective and promotes dialogue and cooperation with Member States.

- Zambia will continue to respect the provisions of protocols relating to human rights both regionally and globally.

- Zambia will accelerate the process of signing such protocols as the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

- Zambia will also speed up the process of signing the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

- Zambia shall endeavour to incorporate the provisions of international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention against Torture and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination into domestic legislation as a clear demonstration of its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights.

- Zambia will continue to cooperate with United Nations human rights treaty bodies by meeting deadlines for submission of periodic reports and acting on their concluding observations and recommendations.

- The just ended comprehensive review of the Zambian Constitution which was embarked upon in 2003 through a Constitutional Review Commission has recommended appropriate ways of entrenching and protecting human rights in the country.

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Note verbale dated 21 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations presents its compliments to Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and has the honour to request him to issue as a document of the General Assembly the pledge which the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is making in support of its candidacy in the election to the Human Rights Council to be held on 9 May 2006 (see annex).

06-32736 (E) 270406 010506

Annex to the note verbale dated 21 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela addressed to the Secretary-General

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Human Rights Council

Voluntary pledges and commitments under General Assembly resolution 60/251

The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela undertakes to:

1. *Cooperate with the Human Rights Council in order that it may develop into an effective, impartial body true to the real principles supporting human rights, by inter alia*:

- Continuing to encourage respect for the principles established in the United Nations Charter, especially in Article 1, paragraph 3, with a view to developing international cooperation in all the fields mentioned by this article, particularly as regards human rights;
- Ensuring observance of the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity in the review of human rights issues; and contributing to the establishment of an appropriate framework for the promotion of a constructive international dialogue which fosters cooperation with a view to promoting and protecting all human rights, in particular economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development;
- Contributing to the enhancement and rationalization of the Council's mandates, mechanisms and functions, while maintaining a system of special procedures, appropriate advisory and complaints procedures, with a view to the realization of all human rights and an effective response to human rights abuses wherever they may occur;
- Cooperating with an exhaustive review of the existing human rights special mechanisms, including an evaluation of the quality and objectivity of the reports submitted by such mechanisms, avoidance of duplication, and the imposition of rigorous conditions for the selection of persons who will make up such mechanisms;
- Pursuing the implementation of a policy aimed at considering the budgetary needs of bodies in charge of promoting human rights. With respect to voluntary donations, Venezuela has made several contributions to the promotion and protection of human rights at the international level, for example, to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations, and the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture.

2. *Promote human rights at the international level, by inter alia*:

- Encouraging countries to strengthen their national human rights systems and establish the office of ombudsman where it does not exist, as fundamental steps for guaranteeing respect for protected human rights;

- Actively participating in debates on efforts to combat Racism and All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance and the promotion of hatred, by means of a constructive dialogue among States;

- Instituting negotiations for a prompt adoption of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and the international convention on the protection of all persons from enforced or involuntary disappearances;

- Actively participating in the working group on the elaboration of an optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, with a view to its prompt adoption;

- Evaluating the possibility of a further protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child establishing a system of individual communications;

- Encouraging States to exchange experiences on the implementation of their human rights obligations, through solidarity and cooperation.

3. *Promote, protect and uphold human rights at the national level, by inter alia*:

- Pursuing public policies at all levels of the Government aimed at promoting and observing human rights, in accordance with the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela;

- Cooperating with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council and the treaty bodies by submitting reports to them in a timely fashion and acting in good faith on their observations and recommendations;

- Continuing to implement and enhance social programmes designed by the Government and aimed at the realization of the rights of the entire population in the fields of health, work, education, food, social welfare, scientific and technological progress, with particular attention to the most vulnerable sectors of the population, with a view to overcoming difficulties caused by social exclusion and poverty. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the approval with which the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization greeted the measures in Venezuela for the provision of primary and specialized health care, the results of the anti-hunger campaign, the programmes implemented in the field of food security, and the achievements in education following the declaration of the country as an illiteracy-free territory in 2005;

- Expediting consultations with the appropriate authorities in order to sign: the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries, and Additional Protocol III to the Geneva Conventions.